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ABSTRACT

The modern nuclear family, often idyllically portrayed as a refuge and a retreat from a demanding world, is fast disappearing. In its stead is a new structure, the postmodern permeable family, that mirrors the openness, complexity, and diversity of contemporary lifestyles. This book examines the postmodern family and finds evidence of an emerging vital family that melds the best of the modern and postmodern families, one in which the needs of all family members are held in a dynamic, if delicate, balance. Chapter 1 looks at the shift from the modern nuclear family to the postmodern permeable family. Chapter 2 explores the meaning of "modern" and "postmodern" in order to understand two sets of cultural ideas that have had enormous influence on changing views of family life. The sentiments and values of the modern nuclear family--expressed as romantic love, maternal love, unilateral authority, and togetherness--in the context of the postmodern permeable family are examined in chapters 3 and 4. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 look at the different family members--parents, children, and adolescents--and assess the impact of postmodern ideas on their role in the permeable family. Chapter 8 presents views of health professionals on child and adult development, and assesses the contribution of these helping professions to the modern and postmodern family need imbalance. Three postmodern societal stressors--shrinking childhood, shrinking normality, shrinking child spaces--and the damage they are doing to contemporary children and youth are the subjects of chapter 9. The final chapter introduces a new family pattern that seems to be emerging: the vital family. Contains bibliographical references for each chapter. (TJQ)

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